Regrowth

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Regrowth

by lakegreen

Summary

Mischa Lecter never wanted for anything, was not denied any pleasure in life. She never felt sorrow or pain, remorse or regret.

Neither death nor distance will keep Hannibal Lecter from surrounding himself with the people he loves - regardless of the price the objects of his affections will have to pay.

Abigail and Will find out just how much Hannibal's obsession will cost them.

Notes

Margaret is the fragment of a name
her love pours like a fountain
her love steams like rage
jaw aches from wanting
and she's sick from chlorine
but she'll never be as clean
as the cool side of satin, Pauline

two girls ride the blue line
two girls walk down the same street
one left her sweater sitting on the train
and the other lost three fingers at the cannery

everything's so easy for Pauline

Versus

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mischa Lecter sat at the front window combing her long, blond hair, and waited for her brother to return home.

She watched two robins as they flit around her flower garden, splashing in the bird bath nestled amongst the rose bushes. The garden was her project, one suggested to her by her brother.

Mischa had planned the layout all winter, clipping articles from gardening magazines, ordering flower seeds, gathering gardening supplies. As soon as the winter frost had cleared she had leapt to work. It was satisfying work, digging and planting and weeding. She relished the dirt beneath her fingernails, the sun on her shoulders.

Mischa planted roses and chrysanthemums, lilies and zinnias. She planted a vegetable garden for her brother, with zucchini and tomatoes, peppers and herbs. After a long day of gardening he would greet her in the kitchen with an ice cold glass of lemonade and a kiss on her head.

“Well done, my industrious gardener. Soon your roses will be as beautiful as their caretaker.”

Hannibal's compliments warmed her from the inside, and she drank them down with the lemonade.

It was a quiet life, punctuated with the short visits from her brother, but Mischa was never bored. Her days were full of hobbies, from sewing to embroidery, to drawing and sculpting. Their secluded cottage had an extensive collection of books and films, of which she had barely scratched the surface. There was a standup piano in the study that she was learning to play. When Hannibal was home he gave her lessons.

Piano was not the only subject he instructed her in. During his absences she was assigned homework - history texts, literature, poetry, plays - which he would quiz her on upon his return. The lessons were not a bore to her - they were a joy, portals into other worlds and lives which she could hop through at a whim. Mischa loved to impress her brother with her newfound knowledge each time he returned to her.

She was now also allowed to go into the town by herself. Hannibal had bought her a bicycle which she rode to visit the grocery store or the cafe. Mischa was even friends with the barrista there, they liked to read the same books. They would greet each other and discuss *Sense and Sensibility* or *Anna Karenina*. Mischa rarely revealed anything about herself.

She lived for her brother's visits. He would only stay for a day or two and then he would leave, despite her protests. Mischa knew he had to leave so that she could stay safe, he assured her of that. Still, each time she tried to keep him for a little longer.

His visits were spent in the city, touring art museums, Hannibal showing her his favorite works. Or often they were at home, where entire days were consumed by Hannibal playing the piano for her enjoyment, or reading to her as she curled up next to him on the couch. When the weather warmed up, he brought home two easels, and they practiced painting the new blossoms in the garden.

Sometimes Hannibal brought a guest for dinner. Sometimes they were still alive. They would never make it back home again.

Mischa Lecter never wanted for anything, was not denied any pleasure in life. She never felt sorrow or pain, remorse or regret.

The sun was setting when Mischa saw her brother's Bentley pull up to the house. In an instant she was outside and throwing herself into his arms. He laughed into her hair, and rocked her back and forth.

“Mischa, Mischa. I've missed you too.”

She rested her cheek on the soft cotton of his summer jacket, and breathed in his comforting scent. Fine Italian soap and aftershave, the tiniest hint of coppery blood, and also something clean and sterile, medical. She knew there was someone in the car.

“Take these inside. I'll meet you in a moment.”

Mischa took the grocery bags he handed her and brought them inside, and proceeded to unpack their contents. She heard the trunk open, a heavy object being shifted around, and then the thud of the trunk closing.

Mischa hummed as she put away truffles, crème fraiche, shallots and red wine. Hannibal entered the front door, carrying a body. No, not a body – the young man was still alive, just heavily drugged. She watched the soft rise and fall of his chest as Hannibal took him into the basement. She did not follow.

With all of the groceries arranged, Mischa wandered over to the record player and browsed their record collection. She chose a collection of Chopin recordings, one of her favorites, and set the record into the player, gently placing the needle. The room immediately filled with the pleasant tones of “Ballade in No.1 in G Minor.” Mischa let the notes surround her as she waited for Hannibal to return.

How incredible, she thought, that music written over one hundred years ago was still enjoyed by people today. How many pianists had performed this piece over the decades? How many listeners had sat, enthralled with the melodic rise and fall of the very same notes she was listening to now? She felt time reaching backwards, the past and present compressing into one moment, all previous listeners merging through the web of time into the one girl sitting alone watching the record spin.

The Ballade ended and a Nocturne began. She heard her brother's footsteps as they ascended the basement stairs, and then approached her. She turned to smile at him, and he returned the smile as he took her hand.

“Mischa, come downstairs and meet our guest.”

She left the record playing and followed him downstairs.

The man was drowsy but awake, shirtless and bound to a metal chair in the center of the room. A single light hung over his head. Mischa could tell that his hair was once well groomed, before he had taken the trip in the trunk of the car. From his smooth, muscled chest and neatly manicured hands, she also knew that he took good care of his body. He is handsome, she thought, for someone who tried too hard.

“This is Jonathan Langley. Twenty-eight, newly hired legal assistant at a small but profitable law firm. Jonathan, this is Mischa. Say hello.”

Jonathan tried to raise his head to look ahead of him. He managed to briefly look at Mischa before his head flopped down again.

“...'lo...M'sch...,” was all he could muster.

“Such a promising young man. Unfortunately, Mischa, he has been very rude. Unforgivably so, I'm afraid,” Hannibal said, retreating into the darkness next to the chair, where his tool table was. When he returned, he held a sharp hunting knife.

“Mischa, if this young man were to relentlessly pursue you, even after you had expressed your disinterest in him, would it be acceptable for him to call you names? Harass you in public? Slip sedatives into your drink? Attempt to assault you?”

Mischa clenched her fists together and stared at Jonathan, imagining him committing the acts Hannibal described. She shook her head with a violent jerk.

“Our dear Jonathan would disagree,” Hannibal said, and crossed the room to stand next to Mischa. “Yes, Jonathan thinks that the world is his playground, and all who wander in it are his playthings. He is privileged to do with them as he likes – especially women. Controlling women makes him feel powerful. No, he is not used to them fighting back – and that is what I saw, Mischa, someone fighting back. She almost paid dearly for it.”

Mischa could feel her pulse quicken with rage. She clenched and unclenched her fists. Her eyes never left Jonathan, who was now looking up, the veil over his eyes slowly lifting to reveal the terror underneath.

Hannibal closed his hand around her wrist and lifted it. In her empty palm he placed the knife, and then closed her fingers around its handle.

“Mischa, show Jonathan what it means to be powerless.”

Jonathan was now awake enough to understand what was happening. A stream of panicked pleading and begging poured from his mouth. Mischa advanced towards him, knife in hand.

She stopped right in front of him, her knees almost touching his. She put a hand under his chin, and tilted his head up to look at her. His eyes were red, snot and tears dripping into his mouth.

“Jonathan, do you think I'm pretty?”

Jonathan nodded and then shook his head, unsure of what the right answer was. He continued to beg for his life. Mischa stroked his hair.

“Shh, it's alright. It doesn't matter. I don't want you to ever look at me again.”

She took the knife and plunged it deep into his right eye.

Mischa felt no remorse or regret. She felt no guilt or fear.

After dinner, Mischa and Hannibal retired to the living room. She entertained him by playing the piece she had been practicing on the piano, showing him her new drawings, updating him on the progress of her garden. He listened attentively, delighted in her successes, and offered encouragement in her struggles.

As the night darkened, and Mischa felt her body begin succumb to exhaustion, she rested her head in her brother's lap as he read to her. *Tomorrow, I’ll have him all to myself*, she thought, and she fell into a deep, calming sleep.

She follows the wolf through the valley, his dark frame lurking through tall grasses. He guides her to a clearing with a pond full of murky water. She stops behind him, but he turns and beckons her to the water, so she steps towards the edge of the pond, and peers into it.

She does not see her reflection, nor her shadow. Instead she thinks she hears a voice, a girl's voice coming from beneath the surface. The water is completely still, and yet the voice grows louder, its tone persistent but distorted. She can make out a few words – *name... killed... find...* – but the rest is lost in the water.

She had heard the voice before - she had distinct feeling she heard it in another dream - but she couldn’t place it.

When she awoke, the dream had nearly dissipated from her memory, and Mischa was not troubled by the voice beneath the water.

She spent the morning gardening, in a paint-splattered sundress. The sun baked her bare shoulders as she labored, pulling out weeds and pruning wilting blossoms. Distantly, she could hear Hannibal playing the piano inside the house. When she was satisfied with the level of weeds, she stepped back to admire her work.

Mischa wanted to make a bouquet for their kitchen table, something to surprise Hannibal with. It needed to be chic and elegant, made with her best flowers. Her eyes fell on her crocus

roses – creamy apricot in color, they were just barely in bloom, and gave off a delicate sweet fragrance. They would be perfect. She picked up her shears and began to snip away, gathering a small collection of the most pristine buds.

She was very careful to avoid the thorns on the branches, but still, Mischa pricked herself as she grasped a stem. A drop of blood formed on her thumb, and she hissed at the pain, sucking on the wound.

Pain. She remembered the sensation from a long time ago, in a different life. Pain, was this what it had felt like? She inhaled the sickly sweet aroma of roses into her throat. The scent met the blood on her tongue and changed into something else, something barely remembered.

Pomegranate. Darkness, blood, and sweet pomegranate.

The garden in front of her began to disappear, swallowed up by a rising tide. A pinpoint of light hovered on the horizon before her, and she felt herself sucked down a tunnel towards it. Images rushed past her, through her, flooded her vision.

– a knife thrust into the belly of a deer, then the belly of a girl. Blood in her mouth, the pain of biting into her finger, tearing open flesh. Her neck sliced open, blood on linoleum floor, darkness surrounding her, three bodies writhing together as she watched. An ice cold drink, a searing burn on the side of her head, a voice repeating over and over again in her head before being thrust away, locked far away in a box deep beneath an ocean of water –

My name is Abigail Hobbs. Hannibal Lecter killed me. I have to find Will Graham.

She grasped onto the words. Her mind emerged above the surface.

Mischa Lecter was gone. In her place, Abigail Hobbs sat, trembling next to the rose bushes.

Her first instinct was to throw up breakfast. Her second was to collapse into the dirt and cry. She gathered herself immediately. Don't cry Abigail, he'll smell it on you. He'll know something is wrong. Get yourself together.

She breathed in. She breathed out. After several repetitions she felt her heart rate resume its normal pace. She choked down the bile rising in her throat.

Abigail Hobbs. Hannibal Lecter. Will Graham.

Abigail repeated the mantra to herself over and over again. She had locked it away inside her heart, when her mind had been emptied by Hannibal to make room for Mischa. In those days of intense darkness followed by blinding brightness, when her consciousness was dulled by the comforting lull of sedatives and hallucinogenics, Abigail had clung onto the last remnants of herself, hiding them so that eventually she could find her way back.

Back then she hadn't known what would become of her. She didn't know what Mischa's life would be like. Now, panicking in the rose garden, Abigail wished she had thrown what was left of her old life away when she had had the chance.

Still holding a rose, Abigail stood and peered at her reflection in the birdbath. The eyes, nose and mouth were still hers. She ran her fingers through her new blond hair and controlled the urge to slice it all off with her garden shears. It was a convincing dye job, she thought. Her freckles had multiplied with her new tanned visage. If she didn't push her hair back to reveal the cauterized flesh where her left ear had been, Mischa Lecter was the picture of health. Who would ever guess that this blond, tanned, smiling girl was connected to the bloody legacy of Abigail Hobbs?

Abigail grasped the rose stem in her hand, forcing the thorn into the flesh of her palm. She looked at the blood pooling on her skin, and remembered the blood gushing out of an eye socket and onto her arm. She had calmly rinsed it off in the basement sink last night, but now she could see the stain as though it were still fresh.

Out, damn spot! She had read those words long ago, in a past life - they stung her now, a cruel joke. She laughed at the absurd, grotesque parody her life had become. The first version of Abigail Hobbs had lived in a realm of fantasy - she had believed in the delusion that the wolves roaming the forest would never breach its borders. Now she had become a player in a Shakespearean tragedy, instead of the fairytale princess.

No, she realized, she was the princess - just not the one she wanted to be. She was Rapunzel, locked away in a tower; she was Sleeping Beauty, trapped inside of her own body. She felt the laughter bubbling up inside her begin to edge on hysterical, and it caught in her throat, turning into a sob. Abigail stopped herself before the tears could reach her eyes.

Last night. The heavy weight of the knife in her hand, Jonathan's pitiful screams as he choked on his own blood.

Nicholas Boyle had not felt like this. That had been an accident. Jonathan – and the ones before him – had been planted. Led to her for slaughter.

Here's the smell of blood still – all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.

The charming, tanned face of Mischa looked up at her from the birdbath. The mask had been constructed so well, with exquisite craftsmanship. All of Mischa was a construction, a desperate fantasy of her creator's long dead baby sister. This fake Mischa had no depth, Abigail thought, she was as shallow as this birdbath.

In this way the mask was appealing. It was very easy to wear. Abigail was sure she could slip behind it and disappear for good, never again to be tormented by the blood caked beneath her fingernails. Mischa felt no remorse for the pain of others, she had not been created that way.

Abigail was tempted. Mischa could stay in this sun-soaked garden forever, enjoying her books and music and painting. Abigail had no family to return to, no home waiting for her. Mischa at least had one brother. One brother was enough.

Hannibal retreating into the darkness. His cool hand as it wrapped around her wrist. The pleased hum of approval as he removed the knife from Jonathan's eye, and kissed Mischa on the forehead.

She dropped the rose and thrust her hands into the birdbath, shattering the reflection. *No, Abigail. That is not who you are. That is not who you wanted to become. That is why you cannot be Mischa.*

I can't become a part of him.

Hannibal. The sound of the piano still drifted from the house out into the garden. She had been such a fool to turn a blind eye to his maneuvering and persuasion. She should have known when he suggested to hide the body of Nicholas Boyle. She should have known the night he seduced Alana and Will into his bed. It had all been right there in front of her. She knew the traits of a master manipulator, she had lived with one for eighteen years.

She was in training to become one herself.

No, she hadn't turned a blind eye. Abigail had recognized his tactics, and found them familiar – comforting. She was drawn to him, and had convinced herself it was his reassurance and charm that she connected to – he reminded her of the good qualities she still had.

In truth, she had found someone as ruthless as herself – and had been enthralled.

Beneath the shallow water of the birdbath, she watched as the blood dissolved off of her skin. She flexed her fingers, and the cuts still stung. *These are your hands*, Abigail told herself. *From now on, they will only do as you command. They will never again be the tools of twisted men.*

She waited for the sores on her palms to stop bleeding, and made sure that there was no trace of blood left on them. She continued to gather roses as she formulated her plan.

Everyone must think she was dead. That's why her ear was missing, surely Hannibal had planted it somewhere compromising. Beyond that, she had no idea what the narrative surrounding her disappearance must be. No one knew that the last one to see her “alive” was Hannibal – that meeting in her old house had ended with a needle full of sedatives up her arm.

It was Will Graham that she had been with right before her death. Will Graham. Abigail felt her stomach drop as her mantra haunted her. *Hannibal Lecter killed me. I need to find Will Graham.* What had happened to Will after she ran from him? Nothing good, she knew. She had to find out.

In their cottage they had no telephone, no television or computer. Hannibal did not buy the newspaper or any magazines. Mischa had never been interested enough to pick up a newspaper on her trips into town – it was a complete blind spot for her, one that was carefully crafted, Abigail was sure.

She would have to wait until Hannibal left again, and she would have to move carefully. All she had was the small cash allowance he left her, and her bicycle.

She could use the computer at the public library. Find out where Will was. How to contact him.

And then what? Go to the police? The FBI? She thought of Jack Crawford, who had always distrusted her. He had always known the truth about her, and now Will could confirm it. Hannibal could poison his ear. By the time she reached them, Hannibal would erase every piece of evidence that he had ever had contact with her. And who would believe the murderous cannibal's orphaned daughter, against the trusted (murderous cannibal) psychiatrist?

No, that world of men had abandoned her. Except Will Graham and Alana Bloom. Whether they knew it or not, they had been just as manipulated as she had. Especially Will, Hannibal's most prized puppet.

The memory of Will and Hannibal dancing in his living room resurfaced in her mind. We were so foolish, she thought. It had seemed so innocent, when Hannibal grasped Will’s hands and swept him across the floor. But it had all been so carefully plotted and crafted, every touch and look meant to draw Will under Hannibal’s spell. The unguarded and giddy smile that had graced Will’s face was burned into Abigail’s eyelids.

Maybe she shouldn't reach out to him. Let him continue on, undisturbed, not knowing what monster's bed he had been lured into. What crimes he had, unknowingly, been complicit in.

She remembered the look of triumph on Hannibal's face that night after the opera. He had been her entire world, her guide and mentor in learning to enjoy life again. Now, she wanted to destroy anything Hannibal had ever taken pleasure in. She fantasized of burning down this cottage - destroying his books and his garden and his darling little sister along with it.

Abigail pictured Will's face, flush with pleasure beneath Hannibal – then imagined it contorted with rage as he struck back against his puppeteer.

She wanted to see Hannibal's face, covered in blood, an expression of horror and fear frozen on it as his captors turned against him.

No, even if the proper authorities could take him down, it would never be enough. Not for Abigail. Not for Will. She didn't want to watch him burn.

She wanted to light the fire.

Abigail would keep Mischa around for a while longer. She still needed her.

Carefully, she put the mask back on.

Mischa gathered up her roses, and joined her brother at the piano.

Chapter End Notes

Lyrics from Margaret vs. Pauline by Neko Case. Thanks for reading! If some of this didn't make sense, I recommend reading the first part, Harvest, to understand what memories Abigail is referencing.

Coming up next: Hannibal and Will's fucked up relationship.

Lure

Chapter Summary

Will receives a letter from a dead girl. To find her, he'll give Hannibal what he's always wanted - Will himself. But first he has to find Hannibal's weakness. Slowly but surely the tables are turning.

Chapter Notes

I caught his words in my open mouth
I gagged and choked and spit them out
I heard him turn as he did hear
my tiny heart beat in his ear
I was already running
oh, I heard him coming

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The letter came in a nondescript white envelope with no return address. It was neatly addressed to *Will Graham, Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane*.

He had hesitating in opening it. Letters without return addresses were rarely good news. He had received a variety of hate mail and death threats since being admitted, and he did not relish the chance that this could be another similar message. Yet, somehow, he felt that this letter was different. Perhaps it was the tidy, delicate handwriting. And in any case, there were very few things that could sink Will Graham any lower. If you've read one death threat, you've read them all. He opened the envelope.

Inside, was a simple letter written in black ink.

Will. I'm so sorry for everything. He's hidden me away. Please don't send anyone to find me. It'll get us both killed. I'll be fine. I just wanted you to know. I think of you often.

-A.H.

Will felt like he had been punched in the gut. A torrent of thoughts and emotions washed over him, each fighting to be recognized first. *Thank god, she's alive. Oh, god, she's alive. There is no way this is genuine. Someone is playing a cruel joke on me. Could she really be alive?*

They had never found Abigail's body. As it turns out, no one looks very hard for the body of a murderous cannibal's orphaned daughter. Especially when her suspected murderer had handed himself over to the authorities on a silver platter.

He read the letter over and over again. He imagined it in Abigail's voice, imagined her calmly etching the note to him when she had a spare moment away from her captor.

Hannibal's face loomed into his mind. It was a face he saw often in his reality, as his former psychiatrist took it upon himself to visit Will in captivity. He alternately consoled and mocked Will in his circumstances.

Could he have written this note to further torment Will, to taunt him with hope, to remind him of his failures? Will was positive that he could. But what would be the point? Will was already captured, and Hannibal was free to entertain himself with his anguish whenever he desired.

He repeated the message to himself until it was completely committed to memory. He memorized what the delicate handwriting looked like. Then he destroyed the letter, ensuring it would not fall into the wrong hands.

Will didn't know what he would do with this new information. He turned it over and over again in his head, examining all possibilities. He wouldn't give the information to Jack – he would never believe him, and even if he did, Will couldn't bear the thought of Abigail falling into the hands of the FBI. Hannibal had surely set her up just as thoroughly as he had set up Will, and they would lock her away in a heartbeat. The media and the FBI and the public would scorn her, chew up her story and then, unsatisfied, devour the girl herself - a fate surely worse than her current position. At least she had found a way to defend herself against Hannibal.

He couldn't tell Alana that Abigail might be alive. Things between them were already complicated enough. He constantly worried about her, away from him and at Hannibal's fingertips. Alana had grown pale and thin in the last few months, wracked with guilt, and Will was helpless to comfort her. She blamed herself for Will being locked up with only his own self-hatred to keep him company.

Her visits were brief and emotional, both parties struggling to form coherent sentences. Once she had been accompanied by Hannibal, and the image of them retreating from his cell, Alana leaning into Hannibal's arm wrapped around her shoulder, was burned into Will's brain.

Will wouldn't, couldn't, burden her with any more difficult information.

Will needed to know if Hannibal had sent him the letter. He wouldn't have to wait long. Hannibal visited once or twice a week, and during his visits, Will started dropping hints to the letter, quoting lines from it.

“Do you think of me often, Dr. Lecter?” Will asked with a sneer during a lull in conversation.

Hannibal did not flinch, did not bat an eye. He gave no sign that this was an unusual question from Will.

“Would you like me to think of you often, Will?”

Will shrugged. “Not particularly. Just wondering what’s rattling around inside that twisted head of yours.”

Hannibal gazed at him with a serene smile on his face.

“I do not think you have to wonder, Will. I'm sure that you already know, no matter how you try to suppress it.”

Hannibal stepped closer to the bars. Will instinctively wanted to back away, but he stayed put. Hannibal lowered his voice and held Will's gaze.

“That is your gift, after all.”

It was. Will's eyes were locked on Hannibal's face and his mind became flooded with scenes from his memories – Hannibal's lips on his own, their bodies crushed together. The heat of being pressed between Alana and Hannibal, buried deep into her while Hannibal moved inside of him, forceful and claiming. He could see himself through Hannibal's eyes, eyes lustful and mouth pliant.

His stomach turned, and with a violent shiver the visions were shaken from his consciousness. Will closed his eyes and took a deep, rattling breath, willing his mind to clear itself of the conflicting feelings of longing and revulsion.

He opened his eyes. Hannibal was inches away from him.

“You feel so much, Will, yet you insist on separating what you think is ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect;’ ‘good’ and ‘evil.’ You and I know that they are far too intertwined to ever divide. So why punish yourself with such arbitrary distinctions?”

The red in Hannibal’s eyes glinted in the dim light, his voice a low murmur that only Will could hear.

“Pleasure is pleasure, Will, and I have always urged you to pursue it - regardless of the source.”

Hannibal had been pouring such honeyed words into WIll’s ears for months now. Will had made little progress with this particular form of therapy.

Yet now, with his rage and resentment bubbling up inside him and threatening to erupt, Will experienced a moment of clarity. Immediately all of his anger drained from him.

To get what he wanted, to find out the truth about Abigail, Will would have to give Hannibal what he wanted.

Will would have to give himself to Hannibal. Heart, body, and mind.

He met Hannibal's stare. Usually, Will used his empathy to see the killer from the crime. Now, he realized it also worked the other way around.

With the killer in front of him, he could see what he was capable of, and Will visualized the uncommitted crime unfolding before him. He was sure that if Hannibal was confident in Will's loyalty, he would do anything to reunite them. Hannibal would have no qualms with breaking him out of the institution.

But first, loyalty was key. Will knew that it wouldn't be built in a day.

It had to be a slow seduction. This was his design.

"I suppose there are few enough pleasures available to me in here, Dr. Lecter."

Hannibal Lecter smiled.

Slowly, Will opened up to Hannibal. Day by day, he fed him pieces of himself, details of his past. Hannibal devoured them, but revealed little about himself. It felt almost normal, slipping back into this routine.

After two months of sharing, Will prompted Hannibal.

"I was under the impression, doctor, that 'sharing' entitles an exchange of information. I seem to be doing all of the sharing with no return."

Hannibal, seated in a chair in front of Will's cell, tilted his head, and quirked his mouth in amusement.

"You wish to know about my history then, Will?"

"If you wish to know more about mine. Quid pro quo, doctor."

A thought flashed behind Hannibal's eyes. He leaned forward, hands clasped together, elbows resting on his knees.

"I suppose it's only fair to tell you about myself. And I would very much like to do so. You don't know how much I've appreciated your honesty with me, Will."

Consciously, Will softened his eyes as he looked at Hannibal. He looked at the other man like he used to, like he was falling apart and Hannibal was the only thing keeping him together.

He leaned towards Hannibal, imploring him with his eyes. Hannibal remained stone faced, but a fire danced behind his pupils.

“I will tell you anything you wish to know. I will give you anything you desire. But not here. Not while there are bars between us.”

Will tilted his head, leaning forward even further.

“Are you proposing something, doctor?”

“Give me a week. When I return, we will leave together. Unless you find this objectionable.”

Will held his gaze.

“In a week then.”

When the lights went out at the hospital, Will knew that it was time.

He heard panicked voices, the high pitched wailing of other patients, feet scrambling. Then, somewhere in the darkness, the metal clang of his cell door opening.

A warm pair of hands found his arm, and gripped it tightly. Warm breath next to his ear.

“Come. Don’t lose me.”

Will let Hannibal guide him through the darkness. They sped down the hallway then up several flights of stairs and down another hallway. Hannibal pulled him into an office off the hall. He flicked on a flashlight after closing the door, then extracted a parcel from a filing cabinet. He gave it to Will.

“Change into these.”

Doctor’s scrubs and a mask. In the flashlight, he saw that Hannibal wore a similar set. Will shed his jumpsuit and put them on. Wardrobe changed, they quit the office and left the building through the maintenance exit, the blistering sunlight temporarily blinding Will.

Hannibal led them down the street. No one paid any attention to the two men. They approached a blue SUV, parked in a corner out of sight.

Will knew that the needle was coming before he felt the sting in his arm, before he saw the flash of movement behind him. He had known this would happen the moment he agreed to escape with Hannibal.

Will's legs gave out, but before his knees could hit the pavement, he felt himself gently lifted and placed into the backseat of the car. His vision plunged back into darkness, the last thing he could grasp onto with his conscious mind was Hannibal's voice hovering above him.

"Forgive me. It will be easier this way."

Yes, he agreed. For both of us.

Flowers. Will is overwhelmed with their fragrance when he wakes, eyelids heavy and limbs sluggish.

Hannibal is next to him, a cool hand on Will's cheek. Will tries to sit up but finds his body uncooperative. Hannibal gently pulls him into an upright position, and puts a glass of water to his lips. Will feels like a child as he sloppily drinks the liquid.

Somewhere below them - a soft, melodious clanging noise. Will has to focus to realise that it is a piano. Hannibal's eyes flicker downwards, to where the source of the sound must be. Will keeps his eyes on Hannibal. He feels sensation returning to his arms.

"Where are we?" Will twitches his fingers, testing their responses. Hannibal reaches forward and threads his fingers through Will's, squeezing slightly.

"Somewhere safe."

Hannibal brings Will's hand to his lips, kissing each digit, running his lips over each knuckle. His eyes are evaluating Will, but underneath they are soft - loving.

Love. The sensation hits Will in the chest, and momentarily he is grateful for the drugs keeping him in a torpid state. It's suffocating, the adoration and desperate *need* to be loved that is emanating from Hannibal. Hannibal has never known how to love - he has only ever owned, controlled, devoured others. Yet now he believes that he can love Will, that Will can love him. His bones are desperate for it, his flesh calls for it.

Suddenly, Will feels guilty for finding this weakness. For intending to use it against the other man.

The moment passes. If he were more lucid, he would have laughed at the reversal of fortunes. How foolish to feel guilt for using the weakness of a man who had so effectively used every single one of his own weaknesses against him.

Instead, Will pulls his hand toward him, Hannibal's head along with it. A fish following the lure. Will holds his gaze, leans his forehead against Hannibal's. He presses their lips together, soft, inquiring. Hannibal melts into Will.

The piano continues to sound below them. The pianist is not particularly gifted - they fumble through a phrase, and stop to play it again, over and over until it becomes acceptable. A surge of hope pulses through Will.

Quid pro quo, doctor.

Chapter End Notes

Lyrics from Fever by Neko Case.

Thanks for reading everyone!

Next Chapter: Things get a little bit rough between Will and Hannibal... also Will sucks at scheming.

Gravity

Chapter Notes

I'm not the man you thought I was
my love has never lived indoors
I had to drag it home by force
hired hounds at both my wrists
damp and bruised by strangers' kisses on my lips

but you're the one that I still miss
you're the one that I still miss
and it's ruthless that it comes as no surprise

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal keeps Will under a haze of drugs for weeks.

Will is allowed to move around the house after a few days, under the surveillance of his chaperone. Hannibal becomes the stage manager of an elaborate theater production, with actors covertly moved from one scene to the next, never crossing paths, quietly slipping behind curtains into locked doors, invisible to their audience.

After Will retires to his room, the door down the hall is unlocked and its inhabitant released. When the other occupant returns to their room, Hannibal unlocks Will's door and lets him roam the grounds.

Hannibal has provided Will with a plethora of books and music to keep himself occupied in his room. Yet mostly Will finds himself straining to listen to the efforts of the struggling pianist, each faltered note and clumsy phrase a reminder of who he is and why he is here.

Will does not mention the other occupant of their cottage. He peruses the library downstairs, admires the garden, watches Hannibal cook, and he is sure it is Abigail in the room down the hall upstairs, he is sure of it but he needs to see her. He can see that Hannibal is itching to reunite them, for all three of them to be together, but he needs to have confidence in Will first.

So Will waits. He leans into every touch, he finishes every meal, he meets every gaze. Still, there is skepticism in the back of Hannibal's eyes. Will can hear the mechanisms inside of his head, whirring and spinning, concocting one new plan after another.

Hannibal prepares a particularly sumptuous meal one night, six full courses, all executed with flair and precision. The wine is exquisite, paired perfectly with each dish. Hannibal has even taken great pains in creating a stunning table setting, with flickering candles and polished silver, blooming flowers pouring out of cobalt blue vases.

Why doctor, Will thinks to himself, *are you trying to seduce me?*

After dinner they sit together in the living room, thigh to thigh, drinking the last of the wine and listening to Debussy on vinyl. Hannibal brings his hand to the side of Will's face, stroking his cheek, brushing through his hair. He leans forward and kisses Will, and spends a long time studying the man's face when they separate. Will puts his hand on Hannibal's thigh, a grounding pressure.

"I've enjoyed having you here, Will. It's far better than talking through bars, don't you agree?"

I've traded one prison for another, Will thought.

"Of course," he said, now taking Hannibal's free hand and holding it in his. "I'm glad I'm with you."

Hannibal did not look away from Will's face as he massaged Will's palm with his thumb.

"And I hope that we can be together for a long time in the future. But I'm afraid we can't stay here for much longer. I have to move us to a new location. I have everything arranged already, and I promise we will be quite comfortable."

Hannibal become very still, Will's hands still in his grasp.

"Will, when we leave here, we will not only be leaving this house and this place. We will be leaving behind our old lives completely. You will leave behind all of your attachments, regrets, hatreds, loves, and connections. All of these things have brought you pain and suffering. I don't want them to continue to plague you in our new life."

Hannibal released Will's hands and stood up, pacing to the window.

"I'm not a fool, Will. You handle your rage well, incredibly well, but it is still there. I can see it flickering around the edges of your eyes, I can hear it in the tremor of your words. You've been pushing it away for too long. Its time we address it, and free you once and for all."

Will's eyes were glued to Hannibal's figure, nearly swallowed up by the darkness of the window. A sinking dread crept into his limbs.

"Tell me Will, are you angry?"

Will's mouth was dry. As if propelled by hypnosis, he replied.

"Yes."

"Who are you angry with?"

"Jack Crawford. Garrett Jacob Hobbs. Alana. Myself," a pause. "You."

Hannibal crossed the room and stood in front of Will again, and pulled him to his feet. He grasped Will's wrists and held his clenched fists to his chest.

“We’ll start from the top. Don’t bottle any of your anger inside. Take it all out on me. Not just verbally. Physically. Release every ounce of frustration.”

Will flinched and looked down. Already his mind was overflowing with horrible thoughts, wretched memories that he had tried to forget.

“I can’t - I don’t think I can go there again. I can’t relive everything. I can’t.”

“That’s why we must purge it all. Embrace your anger, Will, and use it to reclaim your power. Only then will you be able to keep your strength, but be rid of the pain,” Hannibal said. He crooked a finger under Will’s chin and tilted it up to meet his gaze. Hannibal’s pupils were dilated in the dark, blackness consuming his eyes.

Will gripped Hannibal’s wrists, his fingers digging into flesh. “Let’s start then.”

Hannibal didn’t flinch at the pain.

“Jack Crawford. He was a mentor to you, a father figure. But he pushed you too hard and didn’t think about the consequences. He only cared about solving the cases, didn’t he? He manipulated you into believing that he cared about you so that you would solve them for him. But he didn’t stand up for you in the end, did he? He didn’t believe in you. You were too unstable - you were of no more use to him.”

Will pulled back his arm and brought it down across Hannibal’s face. Hard. He could feel himself pulling in deep ragged breaths, vibrating from toe to fingertip. He didn’t want those the thoughts he’d had about Jack to come out of Hannibal’s mouth. But he didn’t know which was worse - that he had thought them himself, or that Hannibal knew that he had.

Hannibal massaged the red wound Will had left on his cheek. His black eyes glittered with delight.

“Very good, Will. An excellent start. Now, Garrett Jacob Hobbs. You resent him for making you a killer, true. But anyone can hate a murderer for their their cruelty, their bloodlust. You hate him for his compassion. You hate him for loving too much, too violently. It made it easier for him to get inside of your head, because he was still human. Confused and deranged, but human. Just like me. Just like you.”

Will hit him again, hard enough to smash the man’s lip against his teeth, cutting it open. Will grabbed Hannibal’s shirt and shook him, rattling them both, almost knocking both of them off their feet. Hannibal grasped onto Will in return, just to keep them upright - not to stop him.

“No,” he hissed, “No. I’m nothing like Hobbs.”

Hannibal grinned.

“Do you still feel connected to Hobbs, Will, with Abigail gone? Do you hate him because you both fought to keep the same daughter, and in the end, neither of you could?”

An inhuman growl bubbled up from Will’s chest, and he was pushing Hannibal across the room, slamming him into the wall. He felt the crack of bone against wood, but while

Hannibal grimaced, he continued to beam at Will.

“And Alana. Beautiful Dr. Bloom. We both know her very well, don’t we Will?”

Will thrust Hannibal into the wall again, the sudden pressure temporarily knocking the wind out of the other man’s lungs. He had to catch his breath before continuing.

“What makes you angriest is that you don’t want to be angry with her, you don’t want to resent her. But still, you do. She’s the one who recommended me to Jack in the first place - she didn’t trust herself to give you counsel. She couldn’t commit to you, so she let me in. She couldn’t control Abigail, so I was able to influence her. Alana let everything happen. She let me seduce you. She let me fuck you.”

Tears of rage burned at the back of Will’s eyes, and he smashed Hannibal against the wall once more.

“I’m sure you’ve had your suspicions, Will. But you’ve never asked. So ask me now, Will, what you never wanted to know the answer to.”

Will shook his head, but forced the words out of his mouth.

“After I was committed, did you… you slept with her. She slept with you.” It wasn't a question.

Hannibal’s eyes softened, but there was no remorse to be found in them.

“She needed a partner to grieve with. As did I. It was natural that we grieve our double losses together.”

Will was very still, clenching his teeth together as he let this confirmation sink in.

Then his hands were digging into Hannibal’s shoulders, and he was throwing him across the room, pure instinct and emotion. He was pushing and punching the other man, hating him for saying these wretched things, hating him for being right.

Hannibal took every punch, every scratch. He was ecstatic. He grunted in pain as Will threw him onto the sofa, then let out an aroused gasp as Will struck him once more across his face.

Will loomed over Hannibal, still grasping him by the front of his shirt, and assessed his disheveled state. Bruises were forming on his face, his lip was cut and bleeding. His shirt, half torn open, revealing reddened flesh underneath. Blood blistered on his arms from where Will had scratched him. They both struggled to catch their breath.

Hannibal reached up and grabbed fistfulls of Will’s shirt, pulling him down to eye level.

“That leaves just you and I, Will. Tell me - what do you hate the most about me?”

Will clenched and unclenched his teeth, willing his jaw to move, pushing his voice up through his chest.

“You used us. You used Alana to seduce me. You used Jack to frame me. You used Abigail to fool me into thinking I had a family. You made us all love you, trust you, but it was all just - just a sick game.”

“I’ve made my mistakes. But I assure you, it was never a game to me.”

Will wasn’t listening. He shook Hannibal, silencing him.

“You killed Abigail. I don’t care about what you did to me, what you could have done - lie to me, abuse me, hurt me, kill me - I don’t *care.* But she didn’t deserve it. She loved you and you killed her.”

“She was a killer too, Will.”

Will shook his head. “She was a tool. Used and discarded when she had served her purpose.”

He knew it wasn't true - he knew Abigail was here, he could feel her in the room upstairs - but it felt true. It was a reality he had lived with for so long, until he had received the letter. The tears were streaming down his face now. Hannibal put both hands beside Will’s face, wiping away the tears with his thumbs.

“There. That’s my Will. This is what I love about you, your endless sympathy for the weak and abandoned. I promise you, I do not intend to discard *you.”*

Will’s hands drifted to Hannibal’s exposed collarbone, then to his neck. He wrapped his fingers around it, just to feel the delicate bones and veins underneath. Hannibal was only a man after all. He could strangle him now, or break his neck. End everything once and for all. His grip tightened.

Hannibal met his eyes. He did not blink. There was no fear in his expression, not a drop of dread or terror. Only love.

“Punish me, Will.” His voice was nearly a whisper.

Will’s grip tightened and he was choking Hannibal, the other man’s face growing red from the lack of air. He did not struggle. His mouth gaped open, his hands lay slack at his sides. He never broke the gaze locked between them. Will felt himself drawn into those black pits, that knew too much about him - that he wished he did not understand. He wondered if he would ever be able to break their gravity - or if the inevitable pull would crush him in its density.

Will dropped his hands and lunged at Hannibal, locking their lips together in a desperate, violent embrace.

Will had one knee leaning on the couch, locking Hannibal underneath of him. Hannibal’s arms flew to Will, hands clawing at his clothes, trying to rip them off. Will removed what was left of Hannibal’s shirt, then gripped his hair with both hands as he ravaged his mouth and neck. Hannibal hissed in pleasure as Will dragged his teeth over his chest, grazing a nipple, biting at his collarbone. He travelled back up to Hannibal’s mouth, thrusting his tongue inside the mewling hollow, the taste of sweat and blood merging on his tastebuds.

Hannibal ran his hands through Will's hair, and Will was no longer human, no longer a man - he was an animal, a spirit of pure lust, a beast of revenge.

When he pulled away from Hannibal to breathe, Hannibal's pulled sharply at his hair.

"Harder," a command breathed against Will's lips.

In one forceful movement, Will grabbed Hannibal's wrists and pinned them to the cushion, and thrust his knee between his legs, making the other man his captive victim. Hannibal arched into Will, pressing his growing erection against his knee. Will growled and shook him, withdrawing the pressure, making Hannibal squirm underneath him.

"No. Don't move."

He let go of Hannibal's wrists. Hannibal obediently left them by his side, looking up at Will like a docile lapdog, awaiting further instruction.

Hannibal's eyes followed Will's hands as they unfastened his belt, then undid the button and zipper on his pants. Will released his member, and stroked it into full hardness, watching Hannibal's face. The man was practically salivating, nostrils flared as he tried to inhale Will's scent. Still, he obeyed the order not to move.

With one hand on his cock, Will raised the other to Hannibal's face, stroking his thumb across the enticing pout his of lips. Hannibal's eyes left Will's cock to meet his stare. His tongue flicked out of his mouth, experimentally tasting Will's finger. Will pushed his thumb past his lips, and Hannibal eagerly sucked on it, gently taking it between his teeth and lapping it with his tongue. Will's cock twitched when Hannibal sucked the whole thumb into his mouth, then slowly withdrew his head, releasing Will's thumb at the very end with a playful nip.

That was enough. Will placed his hand on the top of Hannibal's head, gripping his hair, and instinctively the other man understood the silent order.

Hannibal leaned forward and swallowed Will's length, down to the hilt. The sensation was overwhelming. Will struggled to keep his eyes open - he wanted to watch, but the engulfing suction surrounding him took the air out of his lungs. He threw his head back, gasping in pleasure, and then looked back down at the eager mouth on his cock.

Hannibal met his eyes. He pulled back, pausing to tongue playfully at the head, before swallowing Will back into his throat. He was enjoying this far too much.

When Hannibal began to pull back, Will grabbed his hair with both hands, and forced Hannibal's head all the way down onto his cock. Hannibal started at the sudden violence, his throat shuddering around Will, closing down. Will held his head in place.

"There. Very good."

A rush of pleasure coursed through Will as he gazed down at Hannibal's mouth surrounding him, and he revelled in the soft wet suction enveloping his length. Hannibal, the masterful manipulator, forced to swallow him down. He let the moment sink in - and then he was thrusting into Hannibal, throwing his entire body weight into the motion, fucking his mouth without mercy.

Hannibal, for all of his control and power, had trouble meeting Will's pace. Every sharp inhale through his nose, every spasm in his throat sent Will closer to the edge of ecstasy. But he didn't want this to end yet. He was close, so close to finishing - abruptly he pulled Hannibal off of him, willing his desire to ebb slightly.

With his newly unoccupied mouth, Hannibal sucked in air. He rubbed at his jaw, clicking it back into place. His tongue flicked out to moisten his reddened lips. There was a manic delight in his eyes as he reached for Will.

"Don't let modesty stop you now," he said, placing a hand on Will's exposed hip. "Let me help you find release."

He was pulling them closer together, and had almost made contact with Will's aching cock again before Will stopped him with a firm hand on his shoulder.

"Don't worry. We're not finished yet," he squeezed Hannibal's shoulder. "Turn over."

Will thought he saw a smirk pass across Hannibal's face before he flipped over, bracing his hands against the back of the couch. Will did not wait for him to fully secure himself before he roughly pulled down Hannibal's pants, spit on his fingers, and forced them between his cheeks. Hannibal nearly lost his balance but moaned at Will's touch.

Will pressed his length against Hannibal's backside, gently rubbing it against his crack. Hannibal gripped the couch and pressed himself into Will.

This is what Hannibal wanted, Will thought. *It worked. I reclaimed my power through my anger.* He felt sick at the revelation, but yet - he felt more secure and in control than he had in months. *You think you are so clever, Hannibal, making me believe that I have control when you still hold all of the cards. But no. I will use this for* me, *not for you.*

He spit onto his hand again and slicked down his cock. This was going to hurt, but he wanted it to.

Will pressed himself into Hannibal, whose entire body shuddered. Will reached around and gripped Hannibal's erection, squeezing it gently. Hannibal stiffened at his touch.

Will withdrew his hand and clasped the other man's hips with enough force to leave finger-shaped bruises, and thrust in deeply. An animal growl reverberated through the room, and Will could not tell if it came from him or Hannibal. Hannibal clung to the back of the couch, bracing himself against Will's force.

Sweat, blood, tears. The scents clung to them as Will fucked Hannibal into the couch, Hannibal's head thrown back. Each moan and startled gasp from Hannibal encouraged Will

to thrust harder, rougher. The plush fabric of the cushion rubbed against Hannibal's neglected cock.

Will felt dizzy with raw energy. He ran his hands over the lean, bruised expanse of Hannibal's back, relishing the sight of the man impaled upon him. The power of dominating Hannibal - making him moan, bleed, quiver at his touch - was intoxicating. He remembered the sensation of taking Hannibal inside of him - being filled to the brim, trembling at the delightful pressure - and the thought that he could produce that excruciating pleasure in Hannibal was as arousing as fucking him.

Fucking and being fucked - the two sensations merged in Will's mind, and he buried himself into Hannibal as his orgasm rumbled through his gut and then roared up through his chest. He exploded inside of Hannibal, who clenched around him, shuddered and then responded by coming violently, shooting all over the couch cushions.

Where moments ago there had been a man full of rage and lust and anger and hate - there was now a void. Will's arms and legs turned to jelly. He collapsed into an armchair opposite the couch, too shocked and spent to readjust his clothing or do anything but try and piece the fragments of himself back together.

Across from him, Hannibal collected himself, and removed his pants that had been shoved down to his knees. Naked, he approached Will. He put both hands on the sides of Will's head, and tilted his face up to look at him.

Exhausted, Will's emotions were laid bare before Hannibal. Will had nothing to hide - in that moment, he could not have pulled himself together enough to conceal any hidden thought or doubt from Hannibal.

Hannibal was pleased with what he saw. He removed the last of Will's clothing, pulled him to his feet, and wrapped his arms around him, pressing their naked bodies together. Chest to chest, thigh to thigh, they stood, Will relaxing into Hannibal's embrace.

There was no need for words. Will felt that long ago, in another life, he had hated himself for becoming beguiled by Hannibal's allure, for falling under his influence.

Yet, standing here as Hannibal ran his hands through his hair, and down his back; feeling the other man's breath against his ear, the soft rise and fall of his chest - Will knew he belonged here. Hannibal accepted Will - no explanations needed, no facades required.

He still knew what he had to do. He had to find Abigail, he had to clear his name. He would never forget how Hannibal had twisted them both into this trap.

Still - his relationships with Alana and Jack, his career at the FBI - those had been destined to crumble with or without Hannibal's help, Will knew it was only a matter of time before he wound up self-sabotaging his own life. Everything Will touched turned to ash - and yet here Hannibal still stood, an unmoving monument of flesh and blood.

Hating Hannibal and seeking revenge for himself and Abigail no longer seemed mutually exclusive.

Wil buried his face into Hannibal's chest, and let him gently guide them upstairs into the shower.

The hot, soothing water combined with Hannibal's smooth hands on his body put Will into a dream state. It seemed impossible that weeks ago he had been brooding in a prison cell. That these solid, strong hands had not always caressed his body; that he had ever lived alone, without the hesitant pianist clumsily playing below him while he slept.

Hannibal kissed him under the water, his lips tender and assuring. As they left the shower, Hannibal moved before him, cloaked in steam. The steam turned to fog as they left the bathroom and entered Hannibal's room. The walls had become rows of trees, and the bed was now surrounded by a dense forest. Still naked, Hannibal laid Will into his bed, then laid alongside him. Hip to hip, legs entwined, Hannibal's lips on Will's shoulder blades - Will fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

Music and light drifted over Will, prying his eyes open and pulling him from sleep. The sound of the piano floated through the open bedroom door, and Will was hypnotized by the harmonious melody. These were not the fumblings of the inexperienced pianist - this was an expert.

The door was open. Will was alone and the door was open. He was momentarily stunned by this happenstance.

He found himself rising from bed, through the door and down the stairs. The music had cast its lure and sunk its hook into his flesh. He was pulled around the corner and into the living room, where two figures sat on the piano bench.

Hannibal's elegant fingers danced over the keys, stroking each one expertly, coaxing a luxurious tone from the instrument. Beside him, the young woman sat entranced, watching his practiced movements with awe.

The music seemed to suspend everything in a momentary bubble of peace, like the flecks of glitter in a snowglobe swirling around before they settle. Will found himself unprepared for the music to stop, for his quest to be completed, his curiosity fulfilled. She was here, within his arms reach. Nothing that had come before mattered anymore. What came next was what terrified him.

He stood frozen in the doorway of the room. The piece wound to a close, and the girl applauded the performance. Hannibal kissed her on the forehead, and turned to face Will.

"Mischa, our guest is awake."

She turned to look at him. Mischa was pleasantly tan, her cheeks round and plump, sprinkled with freckles. Her long blond hair fell past her shoulders. She beamed at Will, in a way he had never seen Abigail smile, had not even thought it was possible for her to smile, as though nothing in the world could touch her.

Still, the faint scar marred her throat. And when Hannibal turned his back to her, there was a glimmer of recognition, a spark of warning in her eyes - a look that was pure Abigail. When Hannibal turned back to her, the look disappeared - Will marveled at the craft of her persona.

Hannibal took her hand, and they rose from the piano bench.

“It’s time that I introduce you. Will, this is my sister, Mischa. Mischa, this is Will Graham. He’s going to stay with us from now on.”

From behind her mask, Abigail beamed at Will. She extended her arm to him, and he took her delicate hand in his own. Her skin was so soft, her bones so fragile.

“Will Graham. I'm glad we can finally meet. I’ve heard so much about you.”

Chapter End Notes

Lyrics from Vengeance is Sleeping by Neko Case.

Thanks for reading everyone!

Next chapter: A bittersweet flash back of Alana, Will and Hannibal. And the conclusion as all the players are now aligned.

Paradise

Chapter Notes

hey little girl would you like to be
the king's pet, or the king?
I'd choose odorless, and invisible,
but otherwise, I would choose the king.

even though it sounds the loneliest
and my brother's hands would poison me

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will had never been particularly adept in the kitchen, and befriending Hannibal had only further highlighted his ineptitude. The one thing he was confident he could cook well was fish, angler that he was. In preparation for tonight he had caught a large black bass, gutted it and prepared it for roasting. He would serve it with roasted parsnips and potatoes, and an arugula salad. Simple, but good - something he could successfully pull off and serve to guests.

Guests - it was not often he had multiple guests in his home. A singular guest, yes - but entertaining was not his strong suit.

He found himself wondering what madness had driven him to arrange this dinner. In between clearing the books and notes off of his dining room table, finding three sets of tableware that matched, and pointlessly re-arranging the pillows and blankets in his living room, he laughed at the absurdity of it all. He, Will Graham, was trying to impress his two potential suitors.

The idea had been proposed by Hannibal during their therapy session - the first one after the night at the opera, just two days later. Or what had started out as a therapy session. Will had found himself anxious and tongue-tied, and he paced around the office, examining bookshelves instead of meeting the gaze of the doctor. *What exactly do you say to your therapist after he seduced you into a menage-a-trois and its all you can think about and you want to do it again?*

Hannibal could not resist teasing Will in his awkwardness.

“Is there anything particular on your mind, Will? You seem distracted,” he cocked his head and feigned innocence, although Will caught the mischievous glint in his eye.

“Would you agree, doctor, that it is not entirely, ah - ethical - to become involved in extracurricular activities with your patients?”

Will kept his back to Hannibal, shooting a perfunctory glance over his shoulder as he flipped through a vintage medical journal. He could hear the smile in Hannibal’s voice as he answered.

“Ethical, no, perhaps not. But the line may become blurred when the patient is also a friend.”

Will hastily shut the journal he was holding, then picked out a different one to keep his hands occupied. When Hannibal spoke again, he was much closer.

“For individuals who are stressed, tense, or find it difficult to connect to others, engaging them in such *extracurricular activities* in a controlled, safe environment can greatly increase their happiness. At least, in my experience.”

Will turned and Hannibal was barely an arm’s length away from him.

“Personal or professional experience?”]

But Hannibal did not answer, as he had pressed Will into the bookcase and was kissing him, knocking all of the air from Will’s lungs. The medical journal fell to the ground. Hannibal’s lips were patient - he kissed Will intently, gently, torturously slow.

Will pressed into him, hands grasping the bookshelf behind him. He felt like a teenager again, emotions and hormones raging, clothes heavy and irritating against his skin. When Hannibal separated from him he kept his eyes closed, gulping in air.

“I suggest that if you want to continue this Will, we do so in an environment where you feel in control, safe. On your terms,” Hannibal’s voice was completely steady. Will opened his eyes, watched as Hannibal retrieved the fallen book and returned it to the shelf.

“And if my terms include both you and Alana?”

Hannibal smiled, straightened Will’s collar.

“I’m sure that would be quite agreeable to all parties.”

And so here Will was, worrying if Alana would approve of his choice of beer or if Hannibal would think his table setting was too plain. The dogs eyed him with concern as he paced around the house. Around seven, he shooed them all out into the backyard.

Alana arrived twenty minutes later, slightly early, a bashful grin on her face as Will met her at the door.

“I know I’m early, just thought I could help you set up if you needed anything.”

Her cheeks were rosy from the crisp winter air, her hair slightly windswept. Will wanted to forgo dinner, forget the food cooking in the oven, press her against the wall and kiss her right there. He held himself back.

Show some restraint, for Christ's sake. 'Welcome to the Graham household, would you like your fornication before or after desert?' At least let the woman in first.

He gestured her in, smiling in a hopefully charming manner.

"Sure, I guess you could help me set the table."

As they put out Will's good table cloth, and Alana improvised a centerpiece out of an antique bowl she found being used to hold his keys, Will could feel waves of panic and embarrassment and a thrilled glee emanating from her. They hadn't seen each other since that night, only speaking briefly over the phone when Will had invited her over - a short conversation, just to confirm time and place and attendance.

He realized now how transparent the whole charade was. The evening had never been about dinner. He might as well be serving corn flakes and canned beans for all the attention he was going to be paying his food with Alana and Hannibal at his table.

Every movement Alana made was charged with sexual energy. Every bashful smile, bit lip, and hand tucking a stray hair out of her face sent Will the non-verbal message - *touch me*. But she, like he, was attempting to keep the veneer of civility in place. For now.

Will needed to put some distance between them for a moment, so he offered to pour her a beer, and returned to the kitchen alone. From the fridge, he heard her phone go off.

"Oh," she said, looking at her phone as Will returned with their beers. "Hannibal's going to be late. He's stuck in traffic on the beltway."

Oh. Somehow being left alone with Alana was more intimidating than the prospect of entertaining the pair of them.

"How far out is he?" he asked, trying not to sound anxious. Alana typed into her phone.

"He thinks about an hour out. He also says not to wait up for him," she said, and cocked an eyebrow as she looked back up.

"Do you… do you want to start dinner then? Everything's ready, all I have to do is -" Will started, but Alana interrupted by approaching him and taking her waiting beer from his hand.

"No, let's wait for Hannibal for dinner. I'm not hungry yet anyway," she took a drink, and her expression turned thoughtful. "I suppose we do need to discuss certain… events. And now we have the chance to."

Will had not known how to address the subject with Hannibal, and he certainly did not know how to address it with Alana. He was very lucky that both of them were professionals in talking about the things you didn't know how to talk about.

Gathering her words, Alana momentarily became flustered, blushing into her glass.

"You must think I'm some some kind of… wanton lush - give me a few drinks and I'll just hop into bed with anyone. But that's not me. It's really not. I know I shouldn't have let it

happen without setting up boundaries or thinking about the consequences but I just went with my gut. It just felt so… so -"

"Good. It felt good for me too," Will said. Their eyes met, and he felt reassured in her shared anxiety.

"Will, I still don't think that we should be together as a couple. I don't think it would work. But maybe - maybe a physical relationship could. I just don't want you to think I'm leading you on, or giving you false hopes, or taking advantage of you, or - "

Will laughed, stepped towards her and took her glass, setting it on the dining table.

"You were right. You do think too much," he said. He put his hands on her upper arms, squeezing her gently. She drew closer to him.

"I just want us to be on the same page," she said, and licked her lips.

"Absolutely. Same page. Bookmarked."

He let her lean into him, wrap her arms around his neck, and pull his mouth down to hers. The bitter taste of beer lingered on her tongue, and her lips were as delicious as he remembered.

At first, they were hesitant, gentle - their mouths slowly remembering each others shape. Will buried his hands in her hair, and when they broke apart for air, Alana brushed her fingers through his bangs and across his temple. In that small, intimate gesture, Will knew that she had been right the first time - this was destined to fail. They cared too much about each other to have just a physical relationship - any attempt to do so would be an act of complete self-delusion.

For now, self-delusion felt pretty good.

Will pulled her toward him with full force, and she gasped into his mouth. Alana reciprocated Will's eagerness, clinging to him hungrily. They kissed fervently, Will's hands moving under Alana's blouse, while her lips and fingers sought purchase on any expanse of Will's skin she could find.

One end of Will's dining table was still empty, the place settings for three people not covering the entire surface. Will turned and pressed Alana against the table, and she lifted herself onto it, wrapping her legs around him. Will reached under her skirt, his fingers massaging her through her already wet underwear. Alana's entire body jerked along with his movements - Will gently stroked his thumb over her clit, and she dug her nails into his shoulder, head falling against his chest. Momentarily, he backed away to pull her panties down her legs and over her feet, and she whined at loss of contact.

Undergarments removed, Will made direct contact with the tender flesh between her legs, and he continued his massage as Alana gasped into his chest. Her hands found his belt buckle and she scrambled to undo it - then it was Will's turn to suck in air as her hands found his cock,

stroking it with a clumsy roughness. Alana simultaneously thrust herself towards him and pulled him closer to her.

“Now. I want you now,” she breathed into his ear.

Will fumbled in his pockets, trying to extract one of the condoms he had tucked away, but Alana’s grip on his wrist stopped him

“It’s fine. I want it like this.”

Will met her eyes. *God*. He had never had a woman look at him this way - a primal lust poured from her pupils. Her tongue darted out to moisten her swollen lips - and then he was inside of her, and those lips hung open in a silent cry.

A high pitched ringing filled Will’s ears as he moved inside of Alana. The entire world seemed to have collapsed, leaving nothing but the space between their bodies, all energy created where their limbs touched.

He moved slowly, gently and deeply penetrating her. Alana met each of his movements, arms around his shoulders, forehead pressed to his. As her orgasm approached, she bit her lip and gave his hair a soft tug - Will picked up the pace, thrusting in forceful bursts, and then they were coming together, throwing their chorus of sated moans into the air.

A throat being cleared sounded from the entryway behind them.

“Pardon me. I didn’t want to interrupt. I take it dinner was postponed, then?”

Alana and Will nearly jumped out of their skins when they heard Hannibal’s voice at the door. There was a brief moment where they were school children caught in the act - a frenzied panic swept over them, as they tried to readjust their clothes and steady their breathing - then all at once, the panic left as they remembered that Hannibal was also in on their scheme.

Alana was the first to let out a snort of laughter, and Will soon followed her. They propped each other up on the table as fits of laughter washed over them. Hannibal too was smiling, as he discarded his coat and shoes, then approached them, loosening the knot on his tie as he closed in. When he was within arms reach, Alana pulled him in, and he swallowed her laughter into his mouth as they kissed.

Will watched them, and reached forward to finish undoing Hannibal’s tie - when it was untied, he pulled it off and leaned in to nuzzle the the now-exposed skin of Hannibal’s neck. Hannibal shuddered at the touch, breaking away from Alana and crushing his lips to Will’s.

Food and appetites forgotten, they moved down the hall to Will’s makeshift bedroom, losing articles of clothing as they went. By the time they reached the bed, skin met skin met skin, and they hovered next to it, Alana kissing Will’s chest and Hannibal running his hands down Alana’s back.

Hannibal reached forward to cup Will’s chin, turning his face upwards towards him.

“I told you that this would be on your terms, Will. So tell us, what do they entail?”

The amount of possibilities were overwhelming to Will. He found himself once again growing hard at the parade of erotic images streaming through his mind.

“I’ll show you,” he said finally.

He maneuvered them onto the bed, and soon Alana was between them - her mouth licking and teasing Will’s cock, while Hannibal fingered her with one hand and stroked himself with the other. Will admired the graceful curve of her back, the way her dark hair cascaded down the ivory expanse of her skin. Behind her, Hannibal’s eyes were locked onto Will, a fine layer of sweat glistening on the lithe muscles of his torso.

A delightful pressure grew in the pit of Will’ stomach, radiating from his cock to his toes to his fingers gripping the bed sheets. Hannibal readied himself at Alana’s entrance, meeting Will’s eyes for approval.

Will nodded. Hannibal eased himself into Alana, who moaned around Will. Just the sight of them was enough to get him off - the pink flush of Alana’s skin where Hannibal gripped her, Hannibal’s usually meticulously coiffed hair mussed in erotic disarray, their hypnotic and perfectly coordinated gyrations as they moved together - each element merged to create a visual harmony of arousal. Alana’s diligent and thorough attentions were a blissful excess.

Will could feel Alana’s pleasure as though it were his own. Their bodies formed an incomplete circuit - electricity pulsing from Hannibal, through Alana, and ending in Will. He wanted to finish the circuit - to feel the energy pulse through him, complete him.

Hannibal's eyes were still on Will - they had never left him. Will arched forward, reaching for the other man - who responded by leaning towards him, gaze unwavering. Will placed his hands on both sides of Hannibal's face - and then they were kissing, and Will felt Hannibal shudder at his touch. A charge passed from Will through Hannibal - then it crashed back into him, returned twofold. He felt himself about to plunge over the edge - he could feel that Hannibal was almost there, and so was Alana, if only he could hold on for just a little longer -

Without breaking contact with Hannibal, Will stopped Alana and pulled her up, so that she was kneeling facing Will with Hannibal still inside of her. She clung to Will, and he gently massaged her clit with one hand while he gripped Hannibal with the other.

Alana moaned into his neck, and her body vibrated against him. Then, everything happened at once - Will felt her tip over the edge, and then a strong, nimble hand wrapped around Will's cock, sending him hurtling into an explosion of sensation; Hannibal thrust into Alana one final time, breaking his lips away from Will's to let out an unrestrained groan as he came inside of her.

They collapsed onto the bed, a tangle of limbs. Soaked in sweat and bodily fluids, they still pressed together, the touch of skin to skin comforting and familiar. Will relaxed as he felt Hannibal's hands run through his hair, and the scent of Alana's shampoo fill his nose. It all felt strangely domestic - if only he could always come home to this after a day of murder and violence.

He was about to drift into sleep when he heard a strange guttural rumbling sound next to him - he turned to find Alana burying her face into the pillow, laughing in embarrassment.

"Well, now I'm starving," she said.

Will laughed, then groaned and covered his face with his hands.

"Oh no, dinner - I'm sure it's ruined by now," he said. "I completely forgot about it."

Hannibal sprang into action, untangling himself from the bed and pulling on his pants.

"Leave it to me. You two relax, rinse off, and I'll bring dinner to you."

Twenty minutes later, after a quick shower, Alana and Will were served dinner in bed from what Hannibal had managed to salvage from Will's menu. It was delicious - probably better than what Will had planned in the first place. The giddiness they shared was tangible, contagious - Will found it difficult to stop smiling. Hannibal turned to Will as they ate.

"Will, we must thank you for your hospitality. You have been an extremely gracious and generous host."

Alana exchanged a sly look with Hannibal and grinned, swallowing a mouthful of food.

"You really must let us return the favor. You've treated us so well, it's only fair we do something for you."

Will cocked an eyebrow as he studied his guests.

"I'm sure I could think of one or two things you could do for me."

Will blinked his eyes as he slowly raised himself out of a deep well of sleep, the memory of Alana and Hannibal still floating in his mind. As his vision cleared, he was reminded that he was not in his own house. This was not his bed. Beside him, only Hannibal lay, his breathing steady as he slept.

He chased the remnants of the memory from his consciousness. There had not been a repeat performance - right after that dinner party, everything fell apart. Will's illness had taken over, their work schedules had become grueling, his life had spiraled out of control - from then on out, each domino toppled the next - ending in his arrest.

It had all been an illusion, a dramatic farce - that vision of domestic bliss Hannibal had presented to Will. Everything had been arranged to further pull the wool over Will's eyes, to keep him from seeing what was truly happening.

But that was over now. Now, Will could see everything.

In the afternoon, Mischa lay sprawled across Hannibal's bed, her head buried in a travel guide for Europe.

"Well, Mischa? What's at the top of your list?" Hannibal asked.

"Mmm - definitely Paris. The city of lights - it's so romantic. The art, the cafe's, *la Tour Eiffel* - we'll go someday, right?" she replied, looking up from her book, eyes wide and glittering.

"Without question," Hannibal said, nodding. "You would love the French countryside as well - especially the chateaus of the Loire valley."

Hannibal folded laundry at the foot of the bed, as Mischa browsed a small stack of travelogues piled next to her. She closed the guide to Europe and opened one on Morocco.

"What about you Will? What's at the top of your list?" she asked.

Next to the window, Will nursed a cup of coffee while he skimmed through *Leaves of Grass*. He looked over towards the pair as he contemplated his response.

"Somewhere tropical - like Belize or Costa Rica. See some real rain forests."

Mischa hummed in approval, and her eyes glazed over, as though she imagined herself in the rain forest, an adventurer hacking through the underbrush.

"And you, Hannibal? Would you rather go somewhere you know and love - or somewhere you've never been before?"

Hannibal smiled and tousled her hair.

"It doesn't matter to me. As long as you and Will are there to keep me company."

Mischa rolled her eyes, but grinned.

"Cheater."

She and Will had been probing him gently for details of their departure and intended destination for days. Always just with playful curiosity - not enough to raise suspicion. Hannibal, with rightful caution, remained tight-lipped.

"You will know when you need to," he would reply with a patient smile.

Later, Will joined Abigail in the garden, while Hannibal practiced piano in the house. He was so confident in their loyalty, in his mastery of them, that they were able to conspire together, right under his nose.

Will could tell before she even opened her mouth that the carefree, playful Mischa had been set aside. Steely, brooding Abigail had taken her place. She sat amongst the flowerbeds,

mindlessly pulling out weeds. It was in the set of her shoulders and the line of her jaw that Will could see which girl she was now.

"It doesn't matter how many times I pull these weeds up, they always grow back," she said, to no one in particular.

Once, twice, thrice killed, she thought to herself, *and yet here I still am. My father killed the first Abigail, and Hannibal murdered the second. But the third incarnation - the impostor Mischa - she was my kill. I am now the master of my own life - my own death.*

Will settled next to her, looked past her into the gardens.

"Will," she said, still facing away from him. "You're still with me, right?"

He frowned at the back of her head, confused.

"What? What does that mean?"

"You still want to bring him in, right? I'm not stupid, Will. I see how you are with him. I *hear* how you are. I just want to know that you're still on my side. "

Her voice broke. Will put his hand on her arm, and she turned to him then. The look on her face broke his heart. Underneath the the breezy and cheerful Mischa, underneath the strong and hard Abigail, the terrified girl at her core trembled before him.

What he couldn't tell her, what he could barely tell himself - was that she was right. He was different around Hannibal. He was relaxed... happy, even. He didn't have to pretend to be anything, he didn't have to make any excuses for himself. If he forgot how he had gotten there, how he had been manipulated and lied to, how the man he now slept with was a murderer and cannibal - he could continue on like this, indefinitely.

And there was the problem. He would never be able to forget.

"He'll kill again, Will. And he'll make us help him. You don't know what it's like... you don't know. You don't want to know."

Her hand shook in his. Will wanted to wrap her in his arms, tell her everything would be alright - but he could see the cracks in her armor. One more bit of pressure and she'd shatter into a million pieces. So he contented himself with rubbing her palm with his thumb.

"I'm with you, Abigail. I won't leave you again. We'll bring him down, I promise. You don't have to worry about my loyalty."

She grasped his hand, a resigned smile on her lips. She composed herself.

"He's moving us soon, probably overseas. We need to stop him before that - once we're out of the country, all bets are off," Will continued.

"We have to catch him in the act, then. Nothing else will be enough. That way he can't twist himself out of blame - and we'll be able to clear our names. I know what I need to do, Will,"

she said.

She told him her plan. He knew what it was before she told him, it was a plan he had already envisioned in his mind a thousand times.

It was a plan he would do everything in his power to keep her from executing.

All of the pieces were in place. Now, they waited - waited for the timing to be right. For their captor to be distracted, just for a few minutes - just enough for them to set events in motion.

Dinner at their cottage was a doting affair. Hannibal sat at the head of the table, Mischa to his left, Will on his right. Hannibal went out of his way to make sure the dinner suited his family's tastes, that their every need was catered to. Mischa and Will ate with gusto, clearing every scrap of lettuce, carrot and meat off their plates.

Mischa told a silly joke, making them burst into fits of laughter. Hannibal grinned at Will over his wine glass as if to say, *look how clever our daughter has become*. Will returned the smile, as if to say, *she takes after you, my dear,* and leaned across the table to kiss Hannibal lightly on the lips.

"Ugh, you two," Mischa rolled her eyes at them, still grinning.

In the kitchen, Will dried the dishes after Hannibal washed them. When the final plate had been put away, Will caught Hannibal gazing out the window into the approaching twilight, deep in thought.

Sensing Will's gaze, he turned to meet his eyes.

"Tell Mischa it's time to go. She can take one book with her. I've already packed the luggage we'll need."

Will nodded, and turned to find Abigail in the living room, pretending to read. She looked up at Will as he approached.

"We're leaving. You can pick one book to take with you."

She twitched her head in a nod, and he could see the resolve drop down like a wall in front of her eyes. She was ready to finish this, finish everything, here and now.

Abigail leapt to her feet and walked calmly, but deliberately to the writing desk - behind it she had hidden a cell phone, stolen from an unwary towns person - and a heavy hunting knife, the most lethal weapon she could get a hold of.

She slid her hand behind the desk, to where she had secured the knife - but her fingers met nothing but emptiness.

It wasn't there.

Panic and terror spiked her veins, her heart exploded in her chest - he had found it. It was over. They were dead.

She spun around, and found herself suspended in slow motion - she saw everything before her unfolding, but she was too slow, her body helpless to stop it.

There, on the coffee table, was the cellphone - already on and dialing 9-1-1.

Beyond it, there was Will - hunting knife in hand. Hannibal had not found it. Will had always known where the knife and cellphone were, he must have removed them beforehand, without telling her.

He was going to get himself killed.

Hannibal still stood looking out the window in the kitchen, his back turned to them. Abigail stood frozen as she watched Will approach him, knife poised to strike.

"I'm sorry, Hannibal. I don't think I'll be going with you."

Hannibal turned to see Will, see the knife arcing down towards his chest - and then his arm shot out, and grabbed Will's wrist with inhuman strength. The blade hung frozen in the air, as if it had struck an invisible barrier. Hannibal wrapped his hand around Will's - where he grasped the handle - and thrust his knee into Will's groin, making the man's entire body spasm in pain. The knife fell right into Hannibal's waiting palm.

Will gasped in pain, choking in a strained breath - then he felt the cold steel of the hunting knife press through his shirt, and gently graze his stomach. Hannibal backed him against the wall, careful not to pierce his skin, and jammed his other arm against Will's throat, restricting his breathing.

"Will, Will, Will... to be honest, I find myself speechless."

Hannibal's face was slack, the red of his eyes swallowed by his pupils. He searched Will's face.

"When?" He asked simply. Not *why,* but *when - when did you choose to betray me*?

"Before you broke me out of the hospital," Will choked out.

A trace of sadness flicked over Hannibal's face - brief, devastating, and gone in an instant.

"What a pity. You were so close to reaching your full potential. You and I, we're just alike. You know that we are. I so wanted to see it - your face flushed with pleasure after a kill, one you had chosen for yourself. Now... now I'll have to settle for this - watching the life drain out of your eyes."

It happened so quickly - the pain blinded him. The blackness of Hannibal's pupils seemed to widen and consume the kitchen, Will along with it. The knife sliced deep into his stomach, and he tried to cry out in pain - but no sound came.

Hannibal pressed his lips to Will's, and then leaned in to whisper in his ear.

"Goodbye, Will."

He twisted the knife.

A guttural moan of pain echoed through the kitchen.

The sound had not come from Will. He no longer felt Hannibal's body pressed next to his, and he slumped to the ground, willing his eyes to refocus even as he felt the world slipping out from under him. The kitchen swam before him, he saw two figures, and he strained his eyes to see who stood before him.

Another moan rang out. Everything came into focus. Before him, Abigail stood, bloody kitchen knife in hand. Hannibal slumped onto the ground.

She had snuck up behind them, grabbed the knife from the cupboard, and stabbed Hannibal in the back. Several times. Her whole body shook as she watched Hannibal crumble onto the ground, and then she ran to Will, the knife falling to the ground with an empty clatter.

"Will, oh god Will - you shouldn't have - it was supposed to be me - oh god. Hang in there, help is on the way - the call went through - oh god, Will, you're so stupid, so stupid - please hang on - "

She ripped off her pink sweater, revealing the pale camisole underneath. Carefully, she removed the knife in his gut, pressing the sweater to his gaping wound. Tears streamed down her face as she begged him to *live, please live*.

The sight of vivid red blood on her pale skin hypnotized him. He felt himself pulled into the orbit of an endlessly circling loop - doomed to repeat itself again and again and again...

He wanted to tell her it was alright - if he died, it was worth it. He had no regrets. If it meant that she could live, and that Hannibal was put away - that the loop was broken - he would sacrifice himself a hundred times over.

He clung to consciousness long enough to hear the sirens wail as they approached the house, see the flashing lights outside the window. He heard Abigail yell to the officers outside, then a dozen different voices echoed around the room.

Will closed his eyes, and slipped calmly, silently into darkness.

My Dear Will,

Now, now - best not to show your relief at my sentencing too clearly, or someone may catch on. I know your companions dearly wished to see me sent to the chair - but you, you I know better than that. Criminally insane, life in prison - that is much preferable to dead in the ground, at least for you. I saw it in your face, right before the verdict was read - you envisioned two doors, one the death sentence; the other, life behind bars. You saw one door close, leaving only death open - and a horrible panic came over you. If they bury me, they bury a part of you, too. You realized you did not quite know which part that might be - the best or the worst of you. Or some terrifying combination of both.

They've quadrupled the security since our last excursion here. I doubt you'll be able to return the favor I once paid to you.

Our viper daughter gave exceptional testimony in court. She made an incredible effort to debunk the insanity plea, and deftly managed to sidestep all tricky questions involving her complacency. I have no doubt her counsel was top notch. I hear she has not been charged with any criminal activity. I do confess I am quite proud of her.

She is quite an actress, perhaps you should encourage her to pursue a career on the stage. The art of deception comes as naturally to her as breathing or walking does to you and I. Do not take this the wrong way - I am not angry with her. I am partially to blame for her creation. But if she had not fed you that rotten apple of knowledge, you and I would still be in Eden, enjoying an eternity of beauty and plenty. I created the garden for her, a paradise - and she waited until my back was turned to sink her fangs into me. Be careful that she does not bite you as well.

Take care of yourself. You looked terribly pale in court. Make sure to eat properly. I regret that I am no longer there to prevent you from descending into malnutrition.

I do hope you will visit. But I'm not counting on it.

Yours,

H. L.

Chapter End Notes

Lyrics by Neko Case, "Wild Creatures."

Thanks for reading, everyone!! If you liked this, and you like Hannibal messing with Will like the asshole in love that he is, Alana and Will lovey dovey stuff, Abigail being coy and manipulative, and Clarice being the all-around badass that she is... stay tuned. I'm writing the third and final part of this series, it actually has somewhat of a plot, it'll be multi-chapters, post-Red Dragon, post-book!Hannibal, post everything, and mostly Alana/Will and Hannibal/Clarice with some angsty Hannigram. And maybe, just maybe, some sexy scenes with - well, you'll see.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!